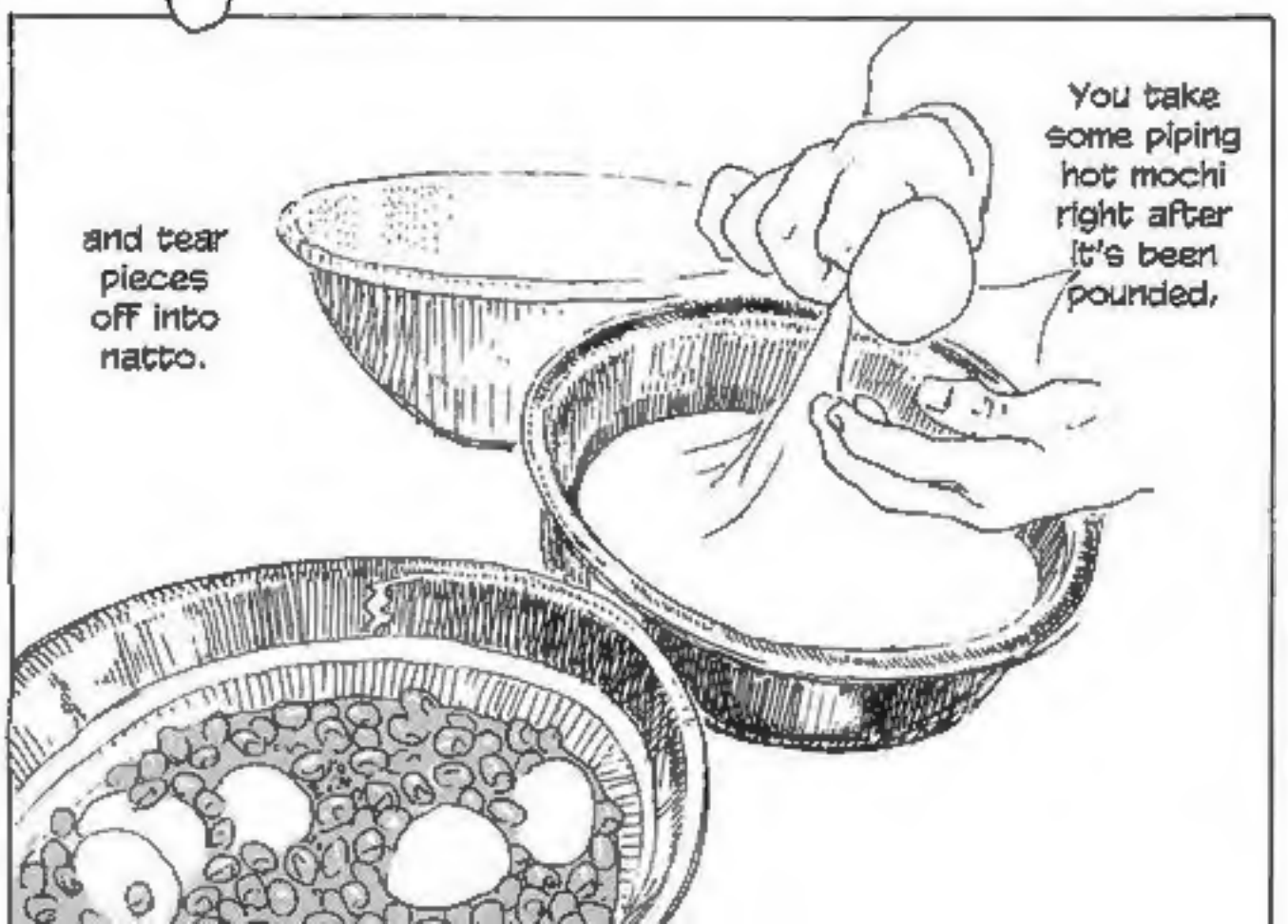
Little Forest

リトル・フォレスト

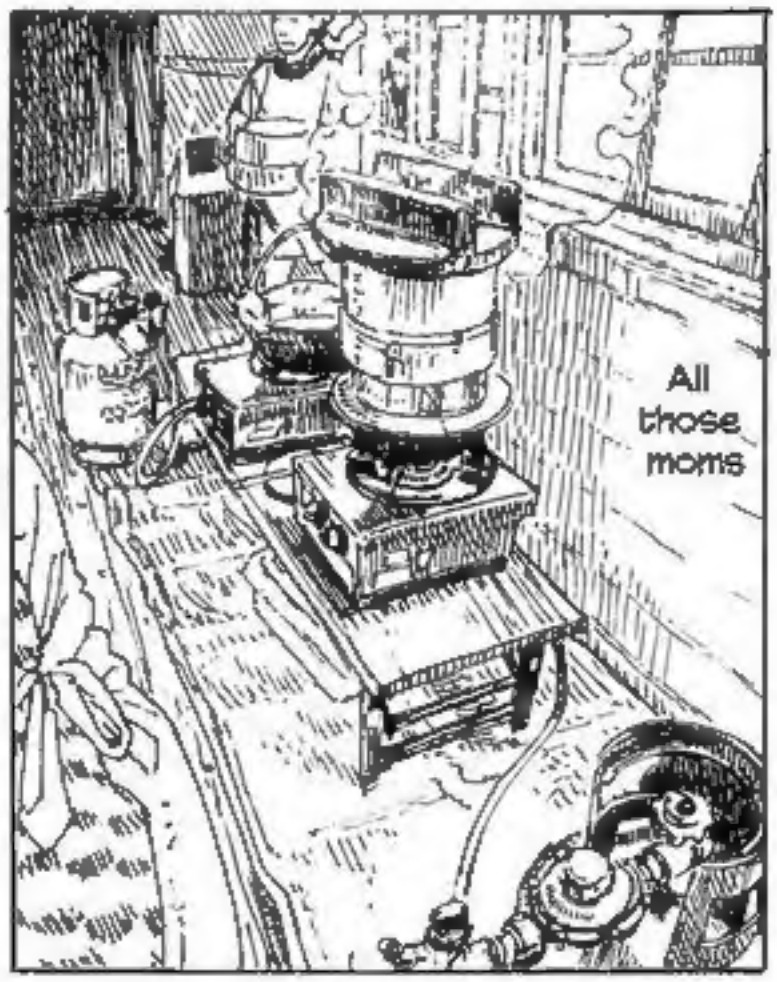
4th dish

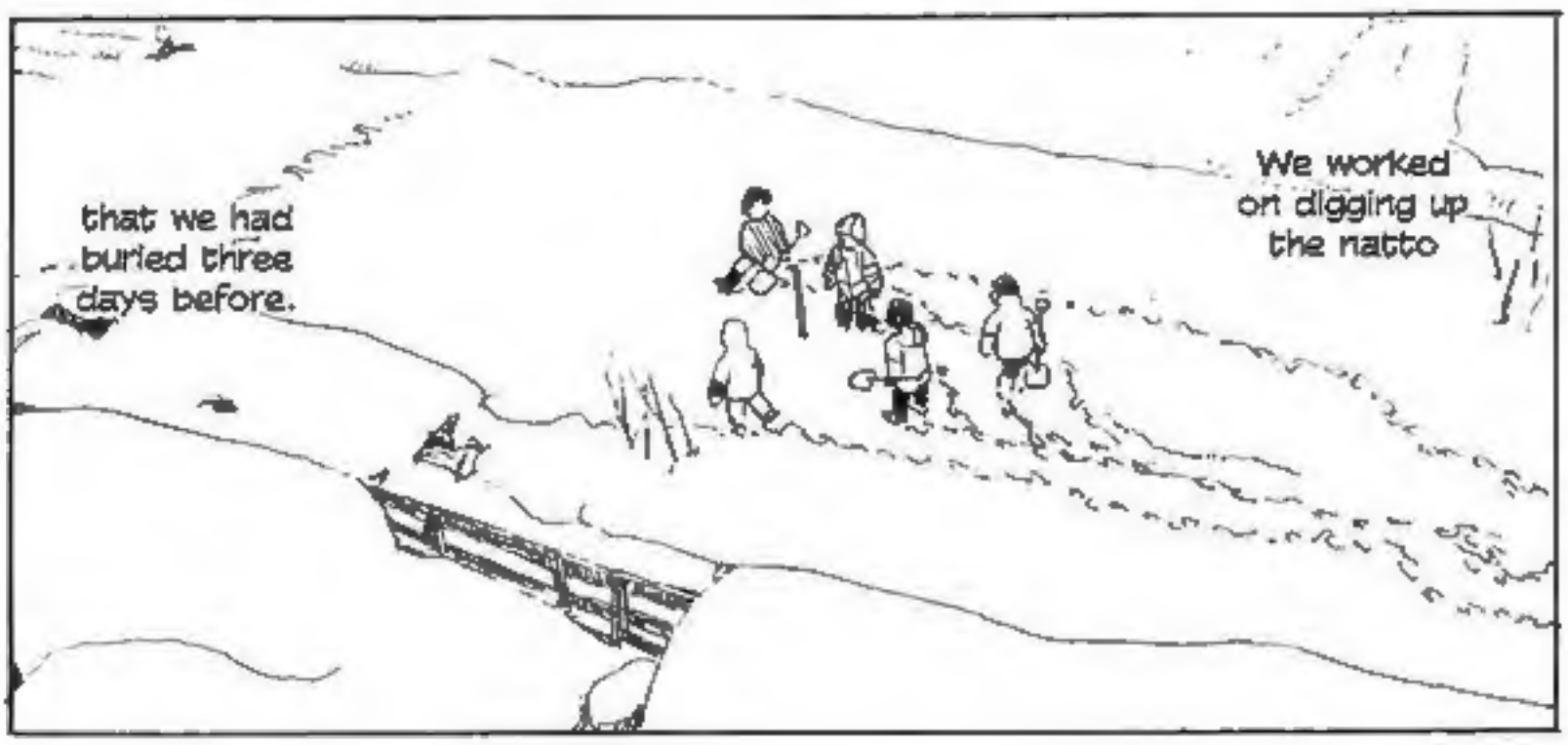
Natto Mochi



Let's All Get Along
TOGETHER
We had a mochi making day at my school, close to twenty years ago.

running back and forth all over the place.


All those moms


We worked on digging up the natto
that we had buried three days before.

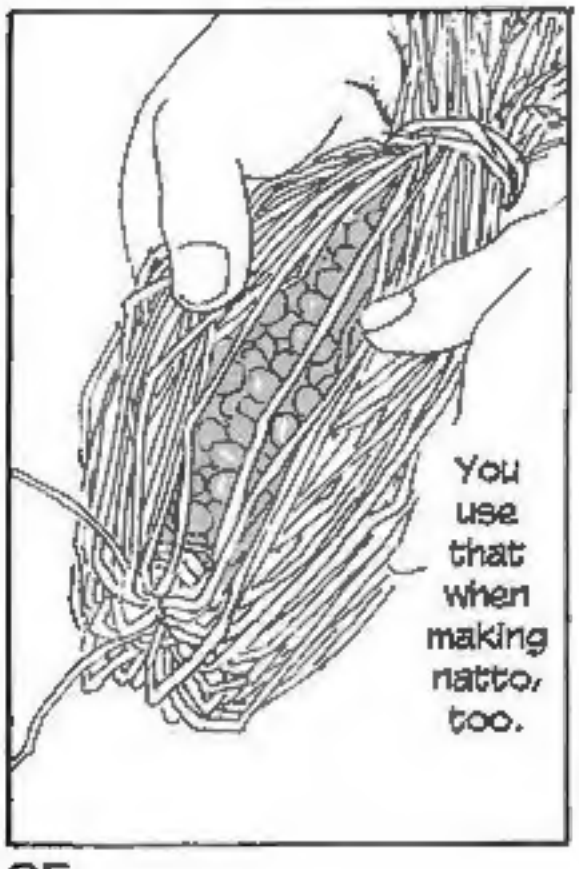
Cabbage,

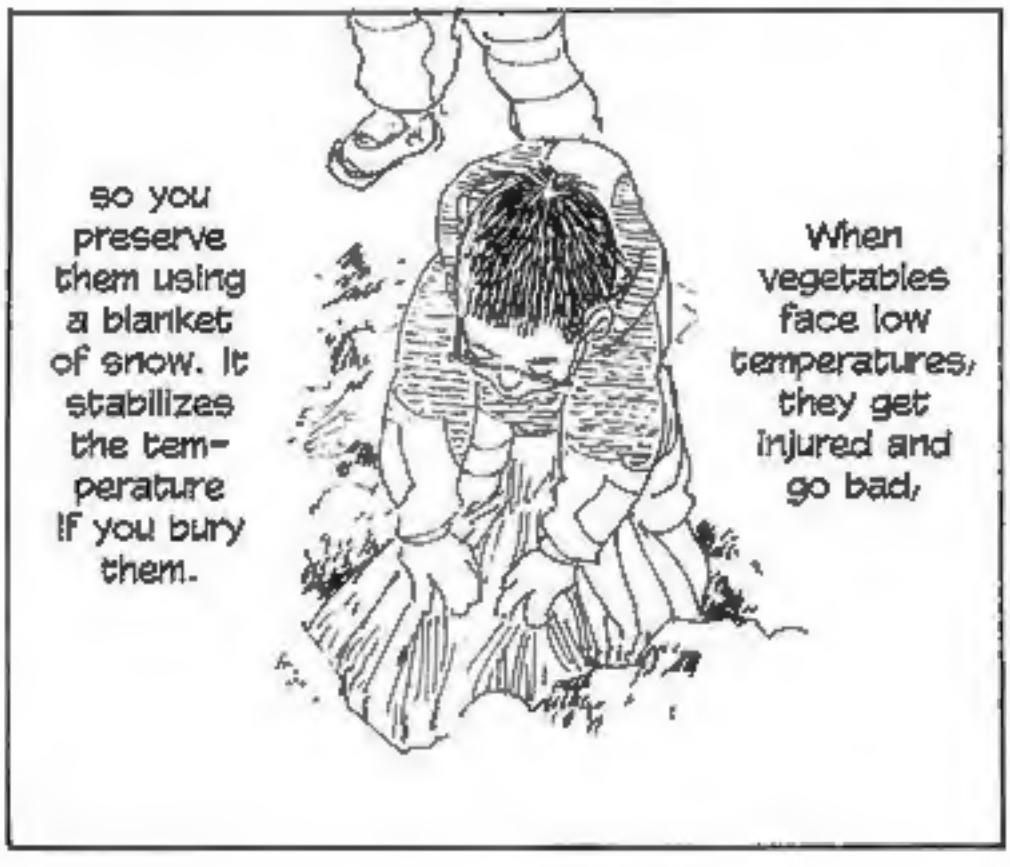
There was all sorts of things buried under the snow.

Sweet potatoes are put in with chaff so that the potatoes don't stick together.

wrapped in cedar leaves to keep the mice away.
daikon and carrots in holes in the ground,

green onion, spinach,


You use that when making natto, too.


so you preserve them using a blanket of snow. It stabilizes the temperature if you bury them.
When vegetables face low temperatures, they get injured and go bad,

A cylindrical container weaved from straw. Used for making natto, among other things.

If you stick a piece of straw inside at this stage, you'll get a lot of strings.

You wrap soy beans that have been boiled soft in "wara-zuto"*

Wrap it in a straw mat.

and then on top of a straw blanket,

dig a hole in the snow,

comes a snow blanket.

BAM

Look at all the strings!

Wow, it's done!

y'know.

WHAP

or else you don' get good tastin' mochi...

You gotta flip it over right,

Stir it up for me so that the mochi don' stick

Run, Ichiko.

...

Okay, check the taste now.

Go on.

Don't worry 'bout it. It's good when it's nice an' warm.

...

Huh? But...

Natto chock-full of sugar and soy sauce.

still warm, and oh-so-soft mochi.

Freshly made,

It was the first natto mochi with sugar and soy sauce that I ever ate.

I just want to keep on eating them forever and ever.

I pop 'em into my mouth one after another.

But after that,

so there wasn't really a particular flavor I could call our "family recipe".

Don't hit me!

I had never eaten natto mochi,

Before my mom started living in Komori,

Mom

Huh.

It's important to knead it before pounding.

mochi rice every year

so rice cultivation is itself "natto mochi" cultivation.

That's why we grow

The bacteria that makes natto is on rice straw.

freshly-pounded natto mochi with lots of sugar and soy sauce became our recipe.

ゴ"

thu

i'

nk

Then there's weeding, and water control.

It's ten minutes by bike to get to the paddy field we're renting.

so I used to worry and go out to the plants everyday.

This year we had rain and low temperatures during the flowering period.

working during lulls in the cold rain.

The whole village sure was frantic during the threshing.

"Rice plants grow from the sound of people's footsteps."

swsh

swsh swsh

...this!

And the product of this year's mochi-rice cultivation is now taken care of by...

thump

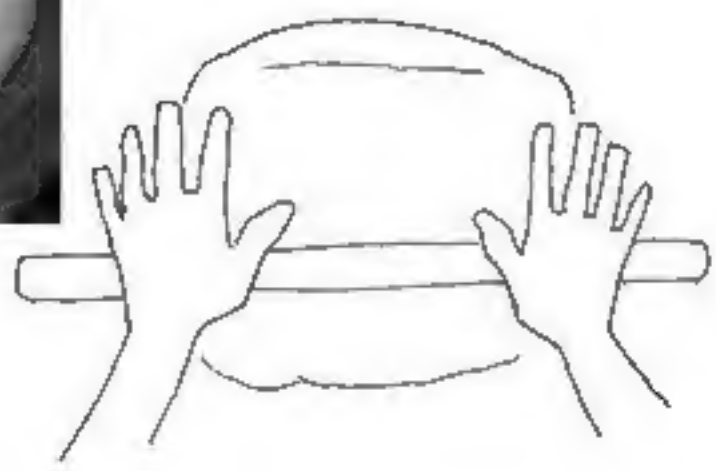
That school is now closed. They only use the building occasionally as a community center.

WHOMP

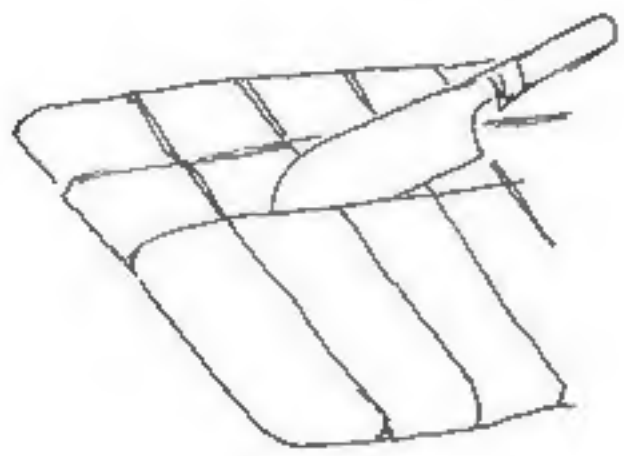
Mochi pounder

4th dish Natto Mochi END

How Mochi is Preserved in Komori



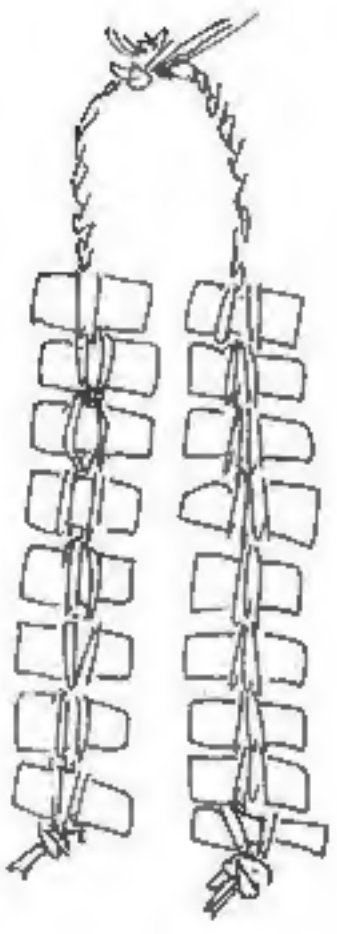
Roll some pounded mochi flat and thin.



Let it sit for a little while until it gets hard, at which point you cut it into squares.

Before cooking them, you should soak them in water for a day if they're dried, or thaw them if they're frozen, then put them in warm water until they're soft, and dress them with tare sauce.

You can bundle them together with straw and dry them out, or wrap them in vinyl and freeze them so they can last longer.



Give it a good covering with potato starch, and put them in paper candy boxes.

I wonder why it is that we
always write the sound foxes
make as "kon" in Japanese.

In Komori, at least, the foxes make
more or less the same sound as dogs,
with an occasional "gyohn".

I guess from far away it can
kind of sound like "kayn", for
whatever that's worth.